The Equality Ride

A Soulforce journey in the spirit of the freedom rides

At military and religious colleges around the nation bans on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender enrollment force students into closets of fear and self-hate. These bans devalue the life of GLBT people and they slam the door on academic freedom. The Equality Ride empowers young adults to challenge these college bans guided by the principals of relentless nonviolence resistance as taught by Gandhi and King.

Scheduled to take place in the spring of '06, the Equality Ride will take 25–30 young adults on a seven-week bus tour to confront seven religious and/or military colleges that ban the enrollment of GLBT students. At each stop along the journey the members of the Equality Ride will present a powerful case for GLBT equality.

Through dialogue with administrators and discussions with students, the young activists of the Equality Ride will make clear the harmful effects of the false notion that homosexuality is a "sickness and a sin," and "a threat to the nation and the military." To make public their case for equality, the young activists on the Equality Ride will hold vigils, Bible studies, class discussions, community forums, and press conferences.

The members of Equality Ride will bring hope and healing to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students who are forced to live and suffer in closets on their college campus. The Equality Riders will reveal to the public the hardship these students face and make clear the need for change.

You are invited to be a part of this movement.
To learn more go to www.equalityride.com.

In challenging college policies that ban gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender student enrollment, the Equality Ride has six primary goals:

The Equality Ride will support the many closeted GLBT students who suffer silently under college policies that ban GLBT enrollment.

The Equality Ride will spread academic freedom through the creation of forums where GLBT issues can be discussed and debated without fear of reprisal.

The Equality Ride will raise the public awareness of the suffering created by the college bans on GLBT enrollment.

The Equality Ride will defend the humanity, dignity, and worth of GLBT people.

The Equality Ride will open a dialogue with the administrators of the targeted colleges with the hope of getting them to change the wording and execution of their policies that ban GLBT enrollment.

The Equality Ride will renew the life and spirit of the Equality Riders because in the process of helping others, we help ourselves.

Hundreds of GLBT students are kicked out of college every year simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

A letter from a former student at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, OK:

"I started at Oral Roberts University in the fall of 2001. I greatly looked forward to the next four years at what I thought was one of the greatest schools on the planet! Well, I found out otherwise midway through my freshman year. The administration at ORU found out I was gay. Not only did they invade my privacy and search my computer, bedroom and personal belongings, but they made me withdraw from the University. What ORU did to me was discrimination at its worst." —*Anonymous*

A letter from a current student at Liberty University, in Lynchburg, VA:

"I am a junior at Liberty University. I am also gay. No one knows. I don't know if I will ever be able to tell anyone. I have heard stories about someone at Liberty finding out a student was gay and the school telling the parents. That scares me to death. If anyone at school found out, I would lose all my friends. I don't know what God thinks about me being gay. Why would He make me like this in the first place? I did not choose it. Regardless of what God thinks I know what everyone else thinks. They would think I'm evil if they knew. I've never even been with another guy. I'm tired of being all alone." —*Anonymous*

A letter from a student who went to the Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD:

"Honor, Courage, and Commitment are the United States Navy's core values. The military's *Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Harass, Don't Pursue* antigay ban robbed me of a very promising career. I was at the top of my class and President of the Class of 1998 but I was expelled because I acknowledged my homosexuality. Through my own experience with the prejudice that is established by the military's mandate, I am convinced that the ban is a lose-lose for everyone. First, for the individual who must always live in conflict, and then, for those that enforce this code and adopt heterosexist ideals for the sake of career, God, and family. —*Rev. Tommy Watkins*

Like the Freedom Rides of the 50s and 60s, the Equality Ride is a student-led effort that takes young adults into epicenters of intolerance and oppression to make a better tomorrow. In going on this journey, the Equality Riders draw inspiration from those Freedom Riders over forty years ago.

Bans on GLBT enrollment exist at over one hundred religious colleges around the nation and are a requirement of every military college.

Brigham Young University, UT

The BYU honor code states: "No one known to be guilty of overt and active homosexual conduct is to be enrolled or permitted to remain at Church Educational System (CES) campuses as students."

Oklahoma Baptist University, OK

The OKU student handbook reads: "The University will not tolerate homosexual activities nor the promotion of homosexuality within its jurisdiction. Admission or detection of homosexual practices or advocacy by a student will require compliance with counseling requirements or departure from the University."

West Point Military Academy, NY

The West Point code states: "Homosexual conduct is grounds for separation from the army. Homosexual conduct is a homosexual act, a statement by a soldier that demonstrates a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts, the solicitation of another to engage in homosexual act or acts, or a homosexual marriage or attempted marriage."

Colorado Christian University, CO

The Colorado Christian University code states: "Practicing, defending or advocating a homosexual lifestyle is a major violation likely to result in suspension, dismissal, or expulsion on the first occurrence."

The Effect of the Bans

College bans on GLBT enrollment do immeasurable damage to closeted GLBT students whose feelings, concerns and questions go unexpressed because they are forced to remain in closets of fear.

Donations

Soulforce is determined to pay the expenses for the Equality Ride. To make this happen we need your help. Sponsor a rider for $3000 or give generously to the Equality Ride fund online at www.equalityride.com/donate

Apply today to be on the *Equality Ride Journey* March and April 2006

You Are Invited to Apply

You have seen examples of the college policies that ban GLBT enrollment and you have read the letters of GLBT students who are affected by these bans. You have seen the problem. Won't you now seriously consider being a part of the solution by applying to be a part of Equality Ride?

By joining in this journey you will be spreading academic freedom. You will be bringing hope and healing to GLBT students who suffer silently in closets of fear. You will be helping to put an end to the dangerous notions that homosexuality is a "sickness and a sin" and "a threat to the nation and the military."

Someone once said, "Risk little. Gain little. Risk much and see the difference." By taking the step to be a part of this journey, you are risking a lot. You are going into hostile environments where you are likely to face rejection and ridicule. You are taking a step unsure of where it will lead. You are giving time and energy, risking possible arrest and more. But by doing so you will gain much. This two-month journey scheduled for spring of 2006 will change you in ways you cannot imagine. Apply today.

To read more about the Equality Ride, or to download an application, go to www.equalityride.com.

Questions?

Contact Jacob Reitan, Director
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In order to graduate, one of these students had to live a lie. Change is coming. Be part of the movement.

What People are Saying About the Equality Ride

With history as our guide, we know that great things can happen when young adults come together to fight passionately for equality and freedom. The Equality Ride follows in the footsteps of history. When this group of young adults does justice together, great things will happen once again.

—Winnie Stachelberg, Vice President, **The Human Rights Campaign**

There is no better way to end anti-gay prejudice than to give non-gay people a chance to talk directly with us, person to person, and hear the realities of gay lives and needs, not stereotypes or falsehoods. When young people speak, they open hearts and minds and reach the reachable. This Equality Ride brings them, their stories, and personal engagement to centers of hostility— places where people need to hear the truth and have a chance to talk and think it through.

—Evan Wolfson, Executive Director, **Freedom to Marry**

The Equality Ride provides today's generation of young adults an opportunity to realize their moment on the front lines of the struggle to do justice. As was the case with the Freedom Rides of the 1960s, today's Equality Ride empowers young adults to make their bold and powerful statement calling on society to take yet another step toward living out its promises of equality and justice for all.

—Patrick Guerriero, President, **Log Cabin Republicans**

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The Equality Ride
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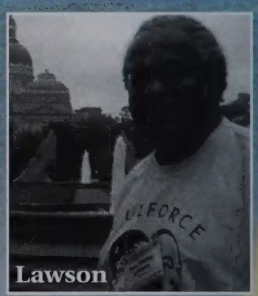
The Equality Ride

In winning justice for sexual and gender minorities on college campuses across the nation, the Equality Ride will be guided by the nonviolent principles of M. K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Prior to hitting the road, the members of the Equality Ride will come together for an in-depth, week-long training led by the Rev. Phil Lawson. Over 40 years ago, it was the Rev. Phil Lawson's brother, Rev. Jim Lawson, who trained the Freedom Riders in nonviolence prior to their journey to justice for civil rights.


Lawson

The Equality Ride is a project of Soulforce, Inc. The goal of Soulforce is freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance. Visit Soulforce online at www.soulforce.org.